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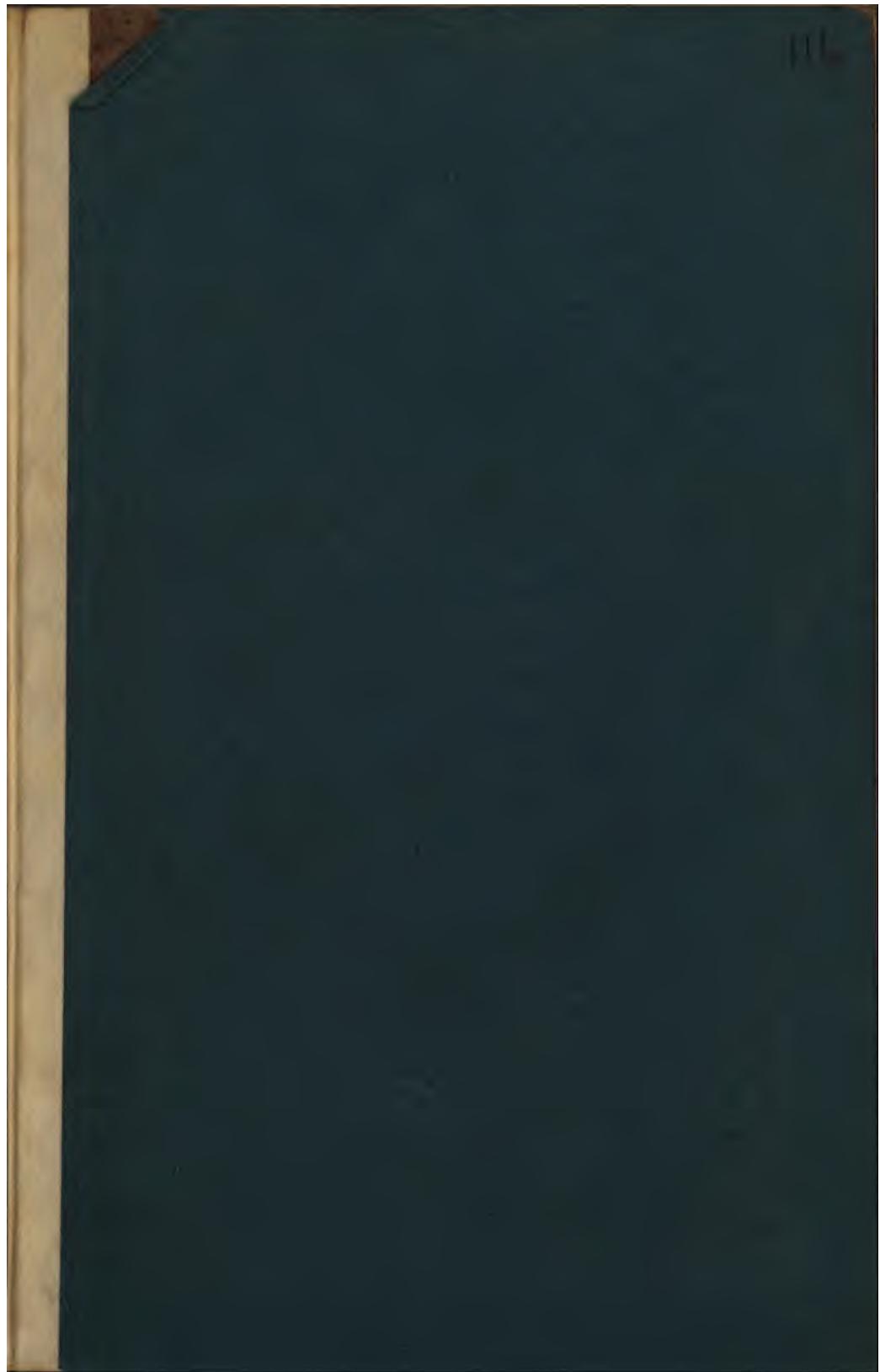
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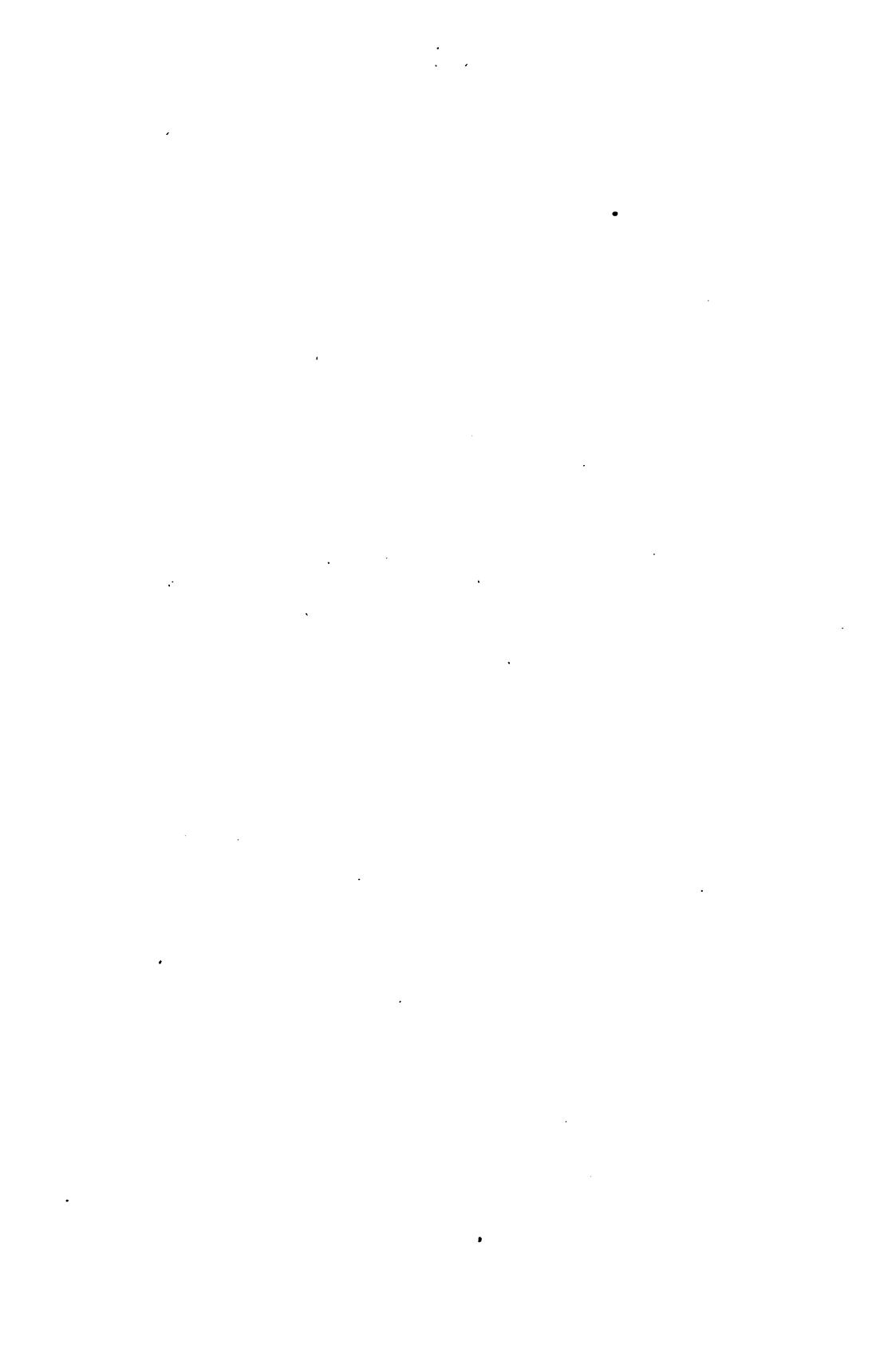
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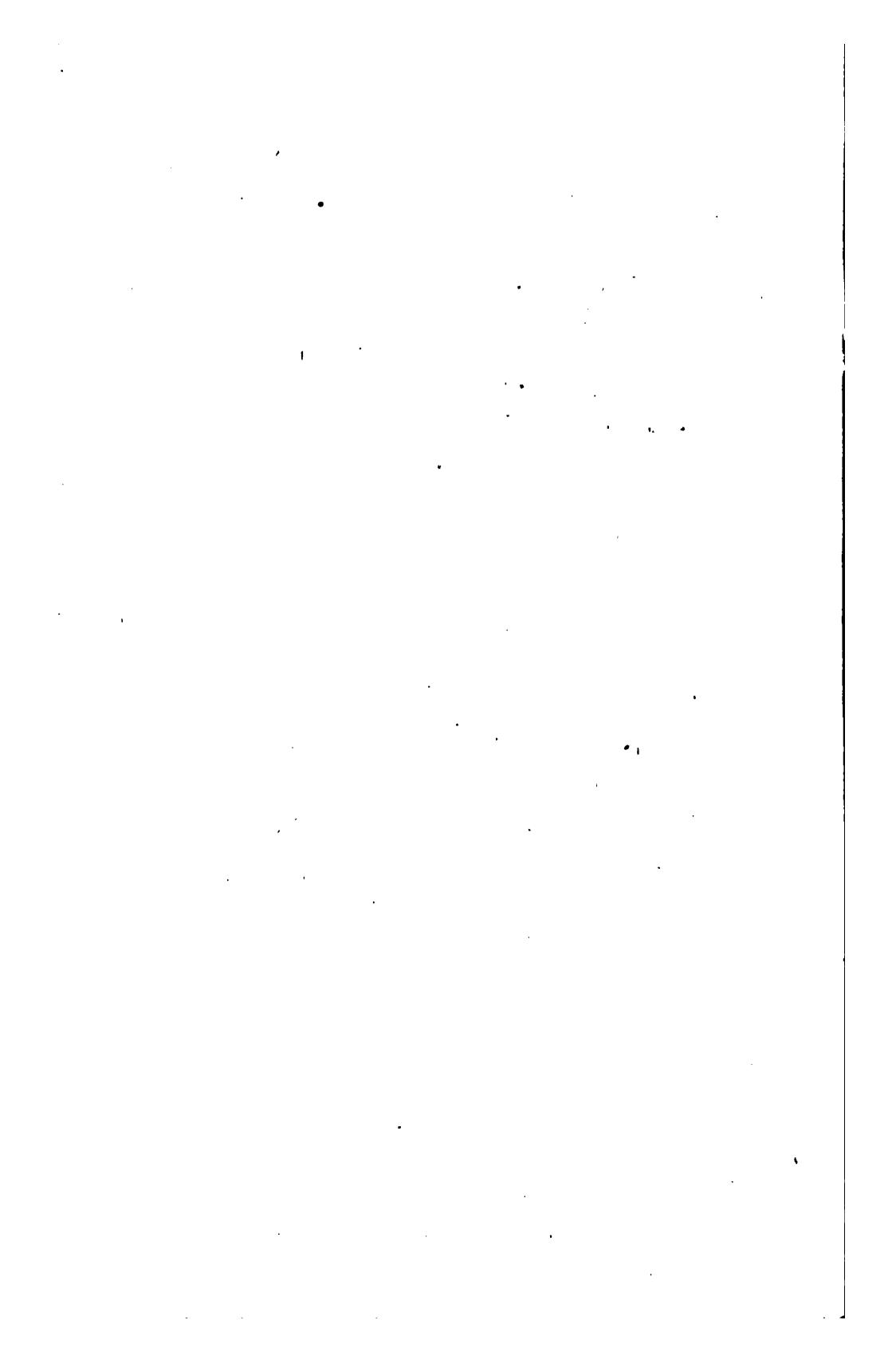
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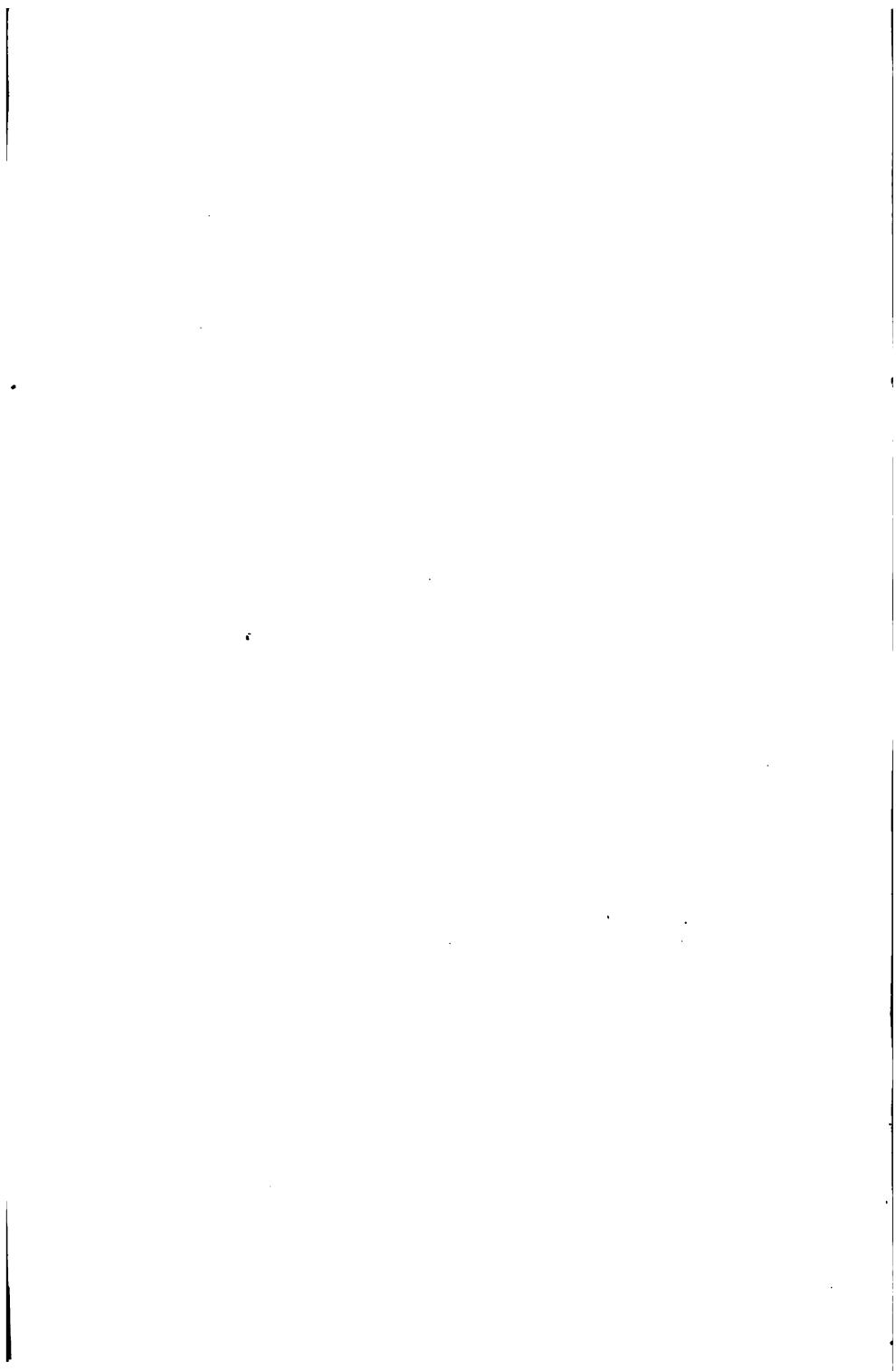


# A LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT MELBOURNE.

&c. &c. &c.



A LETTER  
TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
**VISCOUNT MELBOURNE,**  
&c. &c. &c.  
ON THE PEERAGE,  
SHOWING THE  
ORIGIN OF THE PRESENT MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS,  
AND THE  
MODE BY WHICH THAT MAJORITY MAY BE NEUTRALISED;  
WITH TABLES  
OF THE  
ENGLISH, IRISH, AND SCOTCH PEERAGES,  
POINTING OUT  
THE POLITICAL OPINIONS OF EACH PEER.  
BY  
*Ridgway*  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE **LORD LANGFORD.**

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LONDON:  
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MDCCCXXXVII.

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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
VISCOUNT MELBOURNE,

&c., &c., &c.

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MY LORD,

THE subject-matter of the letter I now have the honour of addressing to your Lordship, was originally embodied in the form of an address to His Majesty, which it was proposed should be presented at Levee, if properly supported by the Liberal Peers *not* having seats in the House of Lords. I, however, found so much apathy and want of unanimity amongst their Lordships, that I resolved on adopting the present course. Some of the noble lords declined, fearing that, by seconding the Address, they might further embarrass your Lordship's Government; to this position I decidedly dissent; had I been honoured with that support and confidence which would have authorised

me to proceed in the course I had first laid down, I feel assured that your Lordship would have had no cause to complain of embarrassment at my hands, my sole object being to strengthen your Lordship's government, and give that solidity in the eyes of the country to your Lordship's ministerial measures they so much deserve.

The difference of opinion on subjects embracing the vital interests of Ireland which exists between the two Houses of Parliament, whereby not only the efforts of your Lordship's Government to ensure the pacification of Ireland, and render the Union between the two countries a source of mutual benefit, are thwarted, but the tranquillity of Ireland threatened, first induced me to enter on the investigation of the Peerage, as it sits and votes in the House of Lords, with a view to ascertain whence the present majority against your Lordship's measures originated. To effect this object, I carried back my inquiry to the first year of the reign of George III., the era of the commencement of that Tory rule which has so long oppressed this country.

I find, that from the accession of George III. to the present time, Tory Ministers have been sixty-four years in power, and have created one hundred and ninety-five Peers, entertaining similar political opinions ; during the remaining thirteen years, the government of the country has been in the hands of Whig Ministers, by

whom sixty-nine Whig Peers have been created, leaving a balance in favour of the Tories of one hundred and twenty-six. On carefully examining the votes of the House of Lords, from the commencement of Lord Grey's administration to the present sessions of Parliament, on questions upon which these two political parties differ, the average standing majority against your Lordship appears to be about ninety; so that had there been no creation since 1761, the Whig party would be in a majority instead of a minority, and the present unfortunate collision between the two Houses of Legislature could not exist.

This is plainly demonstrated by the accompanying tables.

By the sixth schedule of the Irish Peerage tables\*, your Lordship will perceive that, from the year 1761 to 1800 inclusive, two hundred and sixty-nine Irish Peers were created and raised, by which so overwhelming a majority of Tory Peers has been ensured, that no Liberal Peer can hope to be elected as a Representative Peer; and to such an extent is this excluding power exercised, that the Peer who shall succeed to the next vacancy in the representation is always known long before any vacancy occurs: for past elections, Lords Bandon, Dunsany, and Hawarden; for future ones, Lords Clonbrock, Charleville,

\* See Debrett's Peerage.

and Powerscourt. Under such a system, a manifest injury is inflicted upon the Liberal Peers of Ireland, inasmuch as their interests are not protected, nor their opinions supported in the House of Lords by the twenty-eight elected Peers, who are, in fact, merely the organs of the Tory portion of it.

At this moment, only twenty-one, instead of twenty-eight Representative Lords, *purely Irish*, actually sit and vote on the part of the Irish Peerage in the United Parliament, the remaining seven having been created English Peers subsequently to their election, and now sitting in the House of Lords in a *double* capacity; thereby infringing both the *spirit* and the *letter* of the Act of Union.

Of the present Irish Peerage, seventy-five are Peers of Great Britain, the seven who are also Representative Peers included; and your Lordship must see the injustice of Peers, thus sitting in the House of Lords by virtue of English creations, voting for the election of Peers who are to represent the body of the Irish Peerage who have *no* seats in that House.

Such a position was never contemplated by the framers of the Act of Union, and of which it is a farther violation.

In proof of these assertions I have extracted some portions of the Act of Union, and shall endeavour to point out to your Lordship where,

in my humble opinion, the infringements in the Act take place.

In that part of the fourth article of the Act of Union which empowers His Majesty to create Irish Peers, it states—

“ That it shall be lawful for His Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, to create Peers of that Part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland*, and to make Promotions in the Peerage thereof after the Union, provided that no new Creation of any such Peers shall take place after the Union, until three of the Peerages of *Ireland* which shall have been existing at the time of the Union shall have become extinct, and upon such Extinction of Three Peerages, that it shall be lawful for His Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, to create One Peer of that part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland*, and in like manner so often as Three Peerages of that part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland* shall become extinct, it shall be lawful for His Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, to create One other Peer of the said part of the United Kingdom; and if it shall happen that the Peers of that part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland* shall by Extinction of Peerages, or otherwise, be reduced to the number of One Hundred, exclusive of all such Peers of that part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland* as shall hold any Peerage of *Great Britain* subsisting at the time of the Union, or of the United Kingdom created since the Union, by which such Peers shall be entitled to an hereditary Seat in the House of Lords of the United Kingdom, then and in that Case it shall and may be lawful for His Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, to create One Peer of that part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland*, as often as any One of such One Hundred Peerages shall fail by Extinction, or as often as any One Peer of that part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland* shall become

" entitled by Descent or Creation to an hereditary Seat in the  
 " House of Lords of the United Kingdom ; it being the true  
 " Intent and Meaning of this Article that at all times after  
 " the Union it shall and may be lawful for His Majesty, his  
 " Heirs and Successors, to keep up the Peerage of that part  
 " of the United Kingdom called *Ireland* to the number of  
 " One Hundred, *over and above* the number of such of the  
 " said Peers as shall be entitled by Descent or Creation to an  
 " hereditary Seat in the House of Lords of the United  
 " Kingdom."

It appears, from the above extract, that for every three peerages that become *extinct*, *one* may be created, and that when the peerages, by *extinction* or *OTHERWISE*, be reduced to *one hundred*, *EXCLUSIVE* of those having hereditary seats in the House of Lords, as often as any one of such one hundred Peers shall become *entitled*, by *descent* or *creation*, to an hereditary seat in the House of Lords, the King shall be at liberty to create one for every peerage of such one hundred, which shall so fail or become *extinct* by being merged in an English peerage.

The word *OTHERWISE* in the article cited above must mean something or nothing ; if the former, it must be presumed to refer to an extinction *other than by failure*, and what this mode of extinction may be, is very clearly indicated by the passage which immediately follows, *viz.*, " EXCLUSIVE " of those being entitled to hereditary seats in " the House of Lords by *descent* or *creation*." If this position be granted, every time an Irish

Peer becomes *entitled* to a seat in the House of Lords by *descent or creation*, his *Irish Peerage* is *virtually extinct*, and the King is thereby enabled to make a new Irish Peer in his stead; the intention of the Act being, that there shall be always *one hundred* purely *Irish electing Peers*. If then his peerage be extinct, so far as to enable the King to make *one* in his stead, when counted as *one of three* extinct Peerages, or *one* for *one* in the other alternative, how can he sit as a Representative Peer? How can that which is *extinct, represent* that which *is in being?* His *extinction* as an Irish Peer, by his being entitled by creation to sit as an hereditary Peer, empowers the King to create, and therefore, according to the *spirit* of the Act, he vacates his representative seat as effectually as if he had died, leaving no heir to inherit his Irish Peerage. It is not necessary that he should take his seat as a British Peer; he need only be *entitled* to his seat in order to render his Irish Peerage extinct, or this anomaly arises, his Irish Peerage being *extinct* so far as to empower the King to *create* a new *Irish Peer*, he sits and votes, *although so extinct*, as if he were as *purely an Irish Peer* as when he was first elected, in direct opposition to the intention of the Act.

In further proof of this position, it is evident that, if the King chose, previously to the reduction of the Irish Peerage to *one hundred* *purely*

*Irish*, to make twenty-one of the *Representative Peers British Peers*, he could then create seven new Irish Peerages, being *one for every three* Peerages made extinct by such creations, and thereby, at the next election, command seven additional votes; the twenty-one, which authorised the creation of the seven being extinct *de facto*. It is evident, my Lord, that the clause above recited, was framed to prevent double representation, and the omission of words to the following effect, was only an oversight:

“ and any Representative Peer, on being created “ a British Peer, shall no longer sit as a Repre-  
“ sentative Peer, but as a British Peer, and there  
“ shall be a new election for a Representative  
“ Peer, his purely Irish Peerage having merged  
“ in his British Peerage, and thereby made his  
“ Irish Peerage extinct.”

Now, my Lord, I request your attention to the 6th section of the 8th article of the Act of Union, which, though it applies to another branch of the Irish Peerage (the Spiritual), yet fully substantiates my position, that a double representation was always intended to be guarded against by the framers of the Act.

“ And be it enacted, that in case any Lord Spiritual being  
“ a Temporal Peer of the United Kingdom, or being a Tem-  
“ poral Peer of that part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland*,  
“ shall be chosen by the Lords Temporal, to be One of the  
“ Representatives of the Lords Temporal, in every such

" case, during the Life of such Spiritual Peer, being Temporal Peer of the United Kingdom, or being a Temporal Peer of that part of the United Kingdom called *Ireland*, so chosen to represent the Lords Temporal, the rotation of Representation of the Spiritual Lords shall proceed to the next Spiritual Lord without regard to such Spiritual Lord so chosen a Temporal Peer ; that is to say, if such Spiritual Lord shall be an Archbishop, then the Rotation shall proceed to the Archbishop whose See is next in Rotation ; and if such Spiritual Lord shall be a Suffragan Bishop, then the Rotation shall proceed to the Suffragan Bishop whose See is next in Rotation."

If then, my Lord, it was not to be suffered, that a *spiritual Lord*, having an Irish Peerage and being elected as a Representative, should sit in his *rotation* as a *Spiritual Peer*, is it not more insufferable that a Peer, whose Peerage is *extinct de facto*, should still act as though his Peerage were in existence? not only sitting and voting, himself, to the prejudice of the purely Irish Peers, but likewise through his *deputy*, and thus adding another vote to the electors in case of an election ; he himself, notwithstanding his *de facto* incapacity, sitting and voting in the House of Lords, and voting, by himself and his said deputy, for the first vacancy that occurs in the Representative Peerage.

I therefore maintain that, in that portion of the 5th section\* relating to the manner in which the seats of the twenty-eight Peers are vacated,

\* Page 92 of Dublin Edition, 1800.

in these words, “ And whenever the seat of any  
“ of the twenty-eight Lords Temporal, so elected,  
“ shall be vacated, by decease or forfeiture,”  
there is an omission of “ or extinct through his  
“ creation as a British Peer,” inasmuch as his  
*creation as a British Peer* enables the King to  
make a new Irish Peer, as the case may be,  
as before shown, he thereby being *entitled* to  
his hereditary seat by *creation*.

There is another point which bears upon the subject. By the fourth article\* of the Act of Union, Irish Peers, *not* Peers of Parliament, are permitted to be elected to serve in the House of Commons of the united Parliament, but during the time they so serve, they cannot be elected to serve as Representative Peers, neither can they vote for the election of a Representative Peer, so that so long as an Irish Peer represents the *Commons of England*, he cannot either represent or be represented in his own person through his Irish honors ; thus, in a second instance, showing how studiously the framers of the Act avoided double Representation, and going in this instance still farther, his filling a seat in the Parliament excluding him from voting for a Peer to represent himself in the Upper House. Surely, therefore, it is an absurdity to suppose that this exclusion was not to extend to all Peers having, or being entitled to seats

\* Dublin Edition, 1800, page 13.

in the House of Lords, whereby they can sufficiently represent themselves, and need no deputy.

I trust your Lordship will see the force of these arguments, and I hope I have been sufficiently clear in deducing my views upon this most interesting subject, and in concentrating them in as small a compass as possible. If I have succeeded in convincing your Lordship of the tenability of my first position, I shall pass with the greater satisfaction and certainty of still farther success to my second.

According to the Act of Union, it is indispensable that there should be one hundred *purely Irish* electing Peers. The Act empowers the King to make *one Irish Peer* for every *three* that become *extinct*, until the number is reduced to *one hundred*, and then *one* for *each extinction*; whether such extinction occur through failure of heirs, or by being created British Peers. If, then, there cannot be less than one hundred purely Irish Peers to elect their Representatives to sit in the House of Lords, and if, by virtue of their British Peerages, their Irish Peerages are *extinct de facto*, by what right does the Irish Peerage, so extinct, vote for the election of a Representative Peer for Ireland? It is sufficiently represented in the House of Lords in its own person, and can have no more right to a double representation than the Spiritual.

Fixing the lowest number of Irish Peers at one hundred, makes it evident that it was intended that the *electors* should be *purely Irish*, otherwise, no minimum limit could have been necessary ; and the clause enabling the King to make a new Irish Peer for every one that becomes *extinct, or entitled* to an hereditary Seat in the House of Lords by *descent or creation*, clearly points out that the moment a Peer is so circumstanced, he is not to be considered as an Irish Peer, otherwise no reduction in the number would take place ; but this position might arise :—we may suppose the Irish Peerage to consist of two hundred and forty Peers, and that of that number one hundred and forty were also British Peers ; these latter might by possibility unite in opinion, and being the majority, elect twenty-eight of their own party, and thus leave the whole of the purely Irish Peers unrepresented, whilst the one hundred and forty would be doubly represented in their own persons and those of their Representatives. The same argument, so far as regards double representation, holds good against the twenty-eight Representative Peers, voting for the Peer who is to fill up any vacancy in their body.

By the fourth article of the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland, four Spiritual and twenty-eight Temporal Lords was the proportion of the Irish Peerage to sit in the Im-

perial Parliament, and one hundred Commoners, and no more respectively. By the recent Act of Parliament, called the Reform Act, the above proportion of Commoners, on the part of Ireland, was increased to the number of one hundred and five, whilst in the Upper House of Parliament, not only has no corresponding increase of Representative Peers been suffered to take place, but the Legislative proportion has been virtually still further destroyed by the creation of seven Representative Peers of Ireland to British Peerages.

I have endeavoured to point out to your Lordship the hardships which the purely Irish Peerage suffers generally, and more particularly the liberal portion of it. Your Lordship must admit that they have not a voice in the Legislative Chambers of the country, by which their grievances can be made known, nor the prospect of obtaining it under the present illegal system. They are excluded from all power to support, effectually, a liberal administration, the only one that can pacify their hitherto misgoverned country, and open to it that light of civilisation which shines with so much lustre throughout the rest of the United Kingdom—a government whose paternal hand is held out to all classes, desirous of extending the blessings of peace and union to all *grades* and *religions*, without favour or affection, and whose labours to effect

this great and good end, entitles it to the support and confidence of every well-wisher of the country, whose merits authorise it to call upon every liberal and enlightened mind in the United Kingdom, individually and collectively, to rally round it and give it support and solidity in its trial of strength with the interested and illiberal Tory faction, all whose energies are exerted to prevent the effectual working out of the Reform Act.

In the House of Commons the operation of the Reform Act has caused liberal opinions to preponderate, whilst in the Upper House the majority is composed of Lords who entertain Tory principles; Tory Ministers having always adopted the practice of creating peers to ensure the carrying of such measures in the Upper House as they were desirous should become law, the close boroughs at their disposal which filled the benches of the House of Commons, giving them the majority in the Lower House.

Under such circumstances, my Lord, what would become of Ireland were your Lordship's Administration to retire from office? She would again suffer from the effects of the erroneous system of government which has been adopted towards her for more than half a century. To what perils would not her tranquillity be exposed! It is evident, from the *comparative* peace she now enjoys, that the evils resulting from her mismanagement can only be corrected by the

ever watchful and patient care of a government founded on liberal principles, supported by the united and zealous aid of both Houses of the British Legislature and the local government entrusted to the hands of her present enlightened, liberal, and gifted Lord Lieutenant.

Now, my Lord, the most delicate portion of the task which I have taken upon myself, commences : I must confess I feel much diffidence in entering upon it, and am fully aware of the presumption of so humble an individual as myself offering any advice or opinion to a statesman of so much talent and experience as your Lordship.

In the present state of affairs, the general business of the country remains, and must remain, paralyzed, under any change of administration, from the circumstance of the conflicting majorities in the two Houses of Parliament; but were there a farther creation of peers professing liberal political opinions, so as to obtain a more equal balance in the Upper House of Legislature, many would come forward to support the measures of your Lordship's Administration, both in and out of parliament, who *now* consider it useless to advocate the present abortive efforts at legislation, which produce no other effect than that of keeping the country in an alarming state of political ferment. By equalising the political parties in the Upper

House, your Lordship would ensure an impartial discussion of each of those important questions now before the Houses of Parliament—questions on which depend the prosperity and tranquillity of the country, and also the existence of your Lordship's own government: they would be argued dispassionately, disengaged from party feeling and party faction, upon their own intrinsic merits, provided the Tory party in the House of Lords was once convinced that the return of their party to power was hopeless, so long as a liberal government did its duty by the country, and possessed its confidence. And how, my Lord, are you to ensure that confidence? Only by showing that your Lordship has the power to carry through such measures as you know are congenial to the liberal majority of the country. *That* power is solely to be acquired by neutralising the factious opposition you meet with in the Upper House. By examining the tables hereto annexed, your Lordship will find a great number of peers, both in the Irish and Scotch peerages, on whom your Lordship can rely for support; by making your selection from amongst them, the dignity of the order would not suffer, neither would the number of the present peerage be increased, though the right of sitting and voting would be without injustice extended.

By taking this decisive step, your Lordship will have the voice of the country with you, your

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Lordship will gain its unanimous confidence, and bring over to your support many lukewarm and timid friends. Some fear to express their feelings in your Lordship's favour, under the erroneous impression that by so doing they *might* embarrass your government, whereas, if they with one voice proclaimed their wish that your Lordship should adopt the course I have taken the liberty of pointing out, their support, so powerfully demonstrated, must weigh down all opposition in any quarter in which it may exist, and strengthen and consolidate your Lordship's Administration, and permanently establish liberal governments, with all the real good, resulting from them, with the prosperity, peace, and happiness of the United Kingdom.

I have the honour to be,

With the utmost respect,

Your Lordship's obedient, humble Servant,

**LANGFORD.**

*1st June, 1837.*

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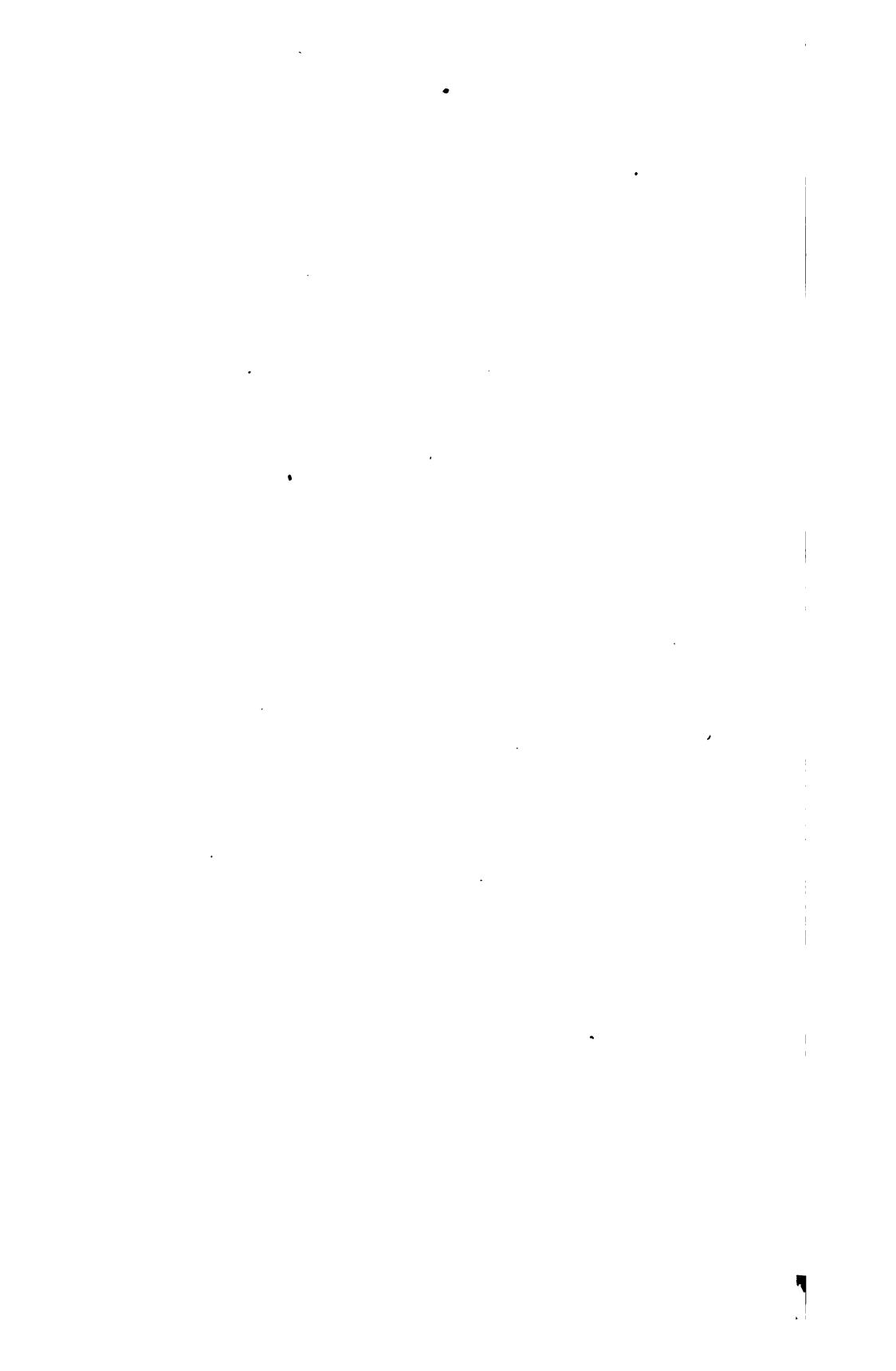
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